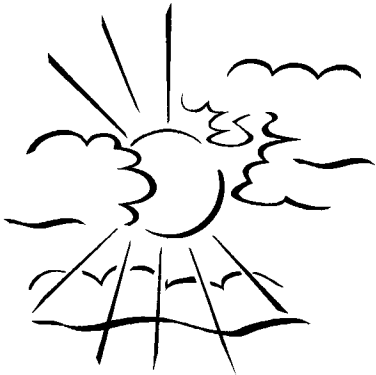


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Articles in Today's Clips

Friday, July 8, 2005

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July 7, 2005

GRANHOLM EXPECTS BUDGET CLOSE TO DEADLINE

Although legislative leaders and administration officials are meeting to work out agreements on economic development, business taxes and the budget, Governor Jennifer Granholm said Thursday she did not expect a budget agreement until late August or early September, leaving little room between the agreement and the end of the fiscal year September 30.

And to further complicate discussions, legislators can expect a revised recommendation from the administration in the coming days. Ms. Granholm told those gathered for a media roundtable with herself and Lt. Governor John Cherry that the recent revenue estimating conference (see Gongwer Michigan Report, May 19, 2005) projected revenues less than would support her original budget proposal.

“We have a proposal we’re going to bring to the budget group on how to resolve that,” Ms. Granholm said, though she declined to elaborate on where cuts would be made or additional revenue generated.

But she said she would leave it to the workgroup process to come up with agreements on the budget, business taxes, economic development programs and the Michigan Merit Award.

“With respect to the workgroups getting consensus on the four issues, we believe that we will get consensus on the majority, at least three of the four,” Ms. Granholm said. “We’re moving forward on the economic plan. The budget may take a little longer. ...The budget will flow from what goes on in those workgroups.”

Ms. Granholm said she was concerned about some comments made by legislative spokespersons after the workgroup meeting Wednesday, but she said discussions Thursday morning with Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (R-Grandville) and House Speaker Craig DeRoche (R-Nov) renewed her trust that they were willing to abide by the ground rules of the workgroups, which included keeping confidential the discussions had within them.

“We all have agreement that we must work together to see some significant change,” she said. “I think trust is continuing to be established.”

She said it was, as with the comments from Wednesday, incumbent on all parties to keep the communication flowing. “If there’s something that one party sees as a slight, you have to get on the phone and rebuild that trust,” she said.

Ms. Granholm appeared to leave room, though precious little, for an overall business tax cut as long as both sides can also agree on how to pay for it. “Obviously the Single Business Tax group can’t give away the store and leave nothing for the ’05-’06 budget,” she said. “We have to be able to balance the budget.”

She said she was also nervous about promising future cuts in exchange for the promise of economic growth. “I don’t want to burden the out years with tax cuts without a way to pay for them,” she said. “We’re in the middle of that now.”

If tax cuts would generate economic growth, she argued that the \$1.7 billion in cuts since 1999 should have kept the state at least on steady ground over the past five years, rather than allowing the job losses it has seen, she said.

“You would think we would be the most economically robust state in the nation given the trajectory of tax cuts,” she added. “I need to see data that we will get the economic growth from an across the board tax cut.”

And Ms. Granholm did not close the door to any item on the budget. “All the items in the budget are valuable,” she said. “You just have to come up with a way to pay for it.”

Ms. Granholm was also less enthusiastic about the book *The Price of Government* as a basis for the state’s budgeting process. The book urges governments to prioritize all expenses and then provide funding to programs in order of priority until all available revenue is allocated. The House is using it for the first time as a budget guide.

“I think what’s been helpful about *The Price of Government* is breaking down the silos of government,” she said.

The process required all of the departments to work together on the budget rather than each working on their own. It also opened up the discussions about the tax loopholes that Ms. Granholm has proposed to close as part of the budget balancing process, she said.

Ms. Granholm acknowledged that pushing the budget until September left the universities with some uncertainty about their budgets, but she said none would receive cuts. “It’s really important that the universities know that I’m not going to sign a bill that reflects what the House has done,” she said.

Both the House and Senate passed budgets that cut funding to Wayne State University and Northern Michigan University to provide increases to other schools, notably Grand Valley State University.

“If we’re going to look shifting the formula to fund universities, it has to be done prospectively,” she said.

And Mr. Cherry said any changes to the Merit Award have to be targeted at results. “The issue here is not just going to college, but completing college,” he said.

PART-TIME LEGISLATURE: With the perennial discussions of the length of the legislative session again surfacing, Ms. Granholm and Mr. Cherry both said the workgroup process could be the yardstick to measure the need for a full-time Legislature.

Ms. Granholm said she “could be persuaded” that the state should move to a part-time Legislature. “We are one of only five states that has a full-time legislature,” she said. “You want to make sure you have a strong executive branch and you want to make sure you have a strong legislative branch (but) you want to make sure the Legislature’s productive.”

Mr. Cherry said residents should measure whether the Legislature meets the challenges of the state’s economy and struggling budget. “If they’re met, that says one thing about the need for reform. If they’re not met, that does state a whole other thing,” he said.

Ari Adler, spokesperson for Mr. Sikkema, said the workgroup process was not a good standard to raise in any battle for a part-time Legislature.

“That’s kind of an empty threat,” he said. “We always negotiate things and we always get things done. There are always differences of opinion, but at the end of the day you have to run the government.”

“We are committed to working with the governor and the Senate to come up with a plan on the budget and to rebuild the economy,” said Matt Resch, spokesperson for Mr. DeRoche. “That’s the best way we will be able to build consensus is to continue to talk to each other.”

Ms. Granholm said legislative leaders had committed to working out the budget and other issues over the summer and to call back the full chambers when an agreement is reached.

But she said there were still issues the Legislature could be addressing over the summer while leaders work on the budget and economic development package: the child protection package, restrictions on sales of adult-rated video games, no-reason absentee voting and the remainder of her Jobs Today package. Bills that the Legislature could leave undone include the possible repeal of the motorcycle helmet requirement.

After Bleak Period, States' Revenues Rise, Governors Report

The New York Times

By ROBERT PEAR

Published: July 8, 2005

WASHINGTON, July 7 - State revenues rose significantly in the last year as the nation's recovering economy produced more sales of goods and services and generated more income for individuals and corporations, the National Governors Association reported Thursday.

"The revenue picture for most states improved dramatically in fiscal 2005," said the report, based on a survey of state fiscal conditions. The survey was conducted by the governors' group and the National Association of State Budget Officers.

The two organizations said they expected the improvement to continue in the coming year.

"In fiscal 2005," the report said, "revenues exceeded original budget projections in 42 states, and five others met their targets. Only three states' revenues were below their budget projections."

This was in sharp contrast to the dismal financial picture in late 2002, when a similar survey said that "nearly every state is in fiscal crisis," facing the worst fiscal problems since World War II, because of plunging tax collections and soaring medical costs.

States are cautious about the fiscal outlook over the next 5 or 10 years. Health costs are still on the rise. Medicaid has become the largest, fastest-growing category of state spending. Many states report a pent-up demand for spending on elementary and secondary education. And many states say they must increase contributions to pension plans for state employees.

Those problems may be more manageable with the rebound of state revenues.

Revenues flowing into state general funds rose 4.7 percent in the 2005 fiscal year, to a total of \$521 billion, and state budget officers expect an increase of 3.6 percent, to nearly \$540 billion, in the coming year, the report said.

Money in a state's general fund, raised primarily from sales and income taxes, is not normally earmarked for a specific purpose. In most states, the 2005 fiscal year ended last week.

"Collections of sales, personal income and corporate income taxes exceeded budgeted amounts in nearly every state," the governors said. "Sales taxes were 1.1 percent higher, personal income taxes were 2.1 percent higher and corporate income tax collections were 8.8 percent above original estimates."

Raymond C. Scheppach, executive director of the governors' association, said, "We have a strong economy now."

In contrast to the states, the federal government brought in less revenue in 2004 than in 2000, in part as a result of tax cuts and a sluggish economy. Federal spending increased 28 percent between those years. Many states, unlike the federal government, are required to balance their operating budgets.

Mr. Scheppach predicted that Medicaid would grow an average of 9 percent to 10 percent a year in the next decade, as it has in the last five years. That implies significantly higher costs than projected by the Congressional Budget Office, which projects Medicaid growing an average of 7.8 percent a year in the next decade. Federal and state spending on Medicaid now exceeds \$320 billion a year.

More than 50 million low-income people are on Medicaid. Mr. Scheppach predicted that more people would qualify because of a continued erosion in health insurance coverage provided by employers.

In the next few days, the Bush administration plans to appoint a commission to recommend ways to rein in the growth of Medicaid.

Duane A. Goossen, the state budget director in Kansas, said: "Virtually all states went through a big revenue dip several years ago. Now most of us appear to be coming out of that revenue slump, returning to a more stable condition."

But Mr. Goossen, the president-elect of the state budget officers' association, said states still had reason for concern. "In Kansas over the last five years," he said, "our average Medicaid growth has been roughly 12 percent a year. Our revenues, on average, grew a little over 3 percent a year in the same period. We expect the same kind of disparity in the future."

Mr. Scheppach said governors would try to protect elementary and secondary education, but he predicted that "you will see cuts in higher education" to help finance Medicaid if states are not given more freedom to control the costs of Medicaid, the nation's largest health insurance program.

State spending is on the rise, with the resurgence of tax collections. In the 2005 fiscal year, spending from state general funds grew 6.6 percent, to a total of \$525 billion. That is close to the annual average of 6.5 percent since 1979, when state officials began systematically tracking such data.

But in the last five years, spending from state general funds had increased more slowly, by an average of 3.9 percent a year. And Mr. Scheppach said the growth would probably average 4 percent to 5 percent a year in the next decade.

California Budget Is Approved

Michigan Report

July 7, 2005

REPORT: REVENUES IMPROVE BUT STATES STILL HAVE BUDGET ISSUES

Most states are seeing improved overall tax revenues, but they still face budget issues because of increased expenditures, especially for Medicaid, says a report from the National Governors Association and the National Association of State Budget Officers.

The report anticipated that state budget revenues would continue to improve during the 2005-06 fiscal year. Expenditures will also continue to increase, though at a more moderate level, and overall state balances will continue to decline.

The report is the latest the two groups have issued on state fiscal conditions. The reports are issued twice a year, and Thursday's release comes just a week before the NGA's summer meeting convenes in Des Moines, Iowa.

According to the report, revenues improved in the current fiscal year in 42 states, exceeding state projections for the fiscal year. Revenues in three states met projections for the 2004-05 fiscal year, and fell below projections in five states.

According to the report, Michigan's revenues for the current fiscal year are on target with the revised revenue estimates, although those estimates were lowered from early estimates.

Michigan is also one of six states that had to cut its 2004-05 budget after the fiscal year began. Two of the remaining five are Michigan's bordering neighbors, Ohio and Indiana.

A total of 42 states reported improved revenues in fiscal 2004-05 compared to fiscal 2001-02 when 42 states reported lower revenues, the report stated. Total revenues for all the states were 2.1 percent higher than budgeted amounts, reflecting the slightly improved economy in most states. Of the three main revenue sources – income, sales and business taxes – business tax collections grew the most, by 8.8 percent, the report said. Income taxes in those states with the taxes averaged 2.1 percent more than the previous year, and overall sales tax revenues were 1.1 percent higher.

And for the upcoming year, the states altogether see revenues increasing in 2005-06 by 5.2 percent over the 2004-05 fiscal year, the report said.

But part of the anticipated improved for 2005-06 comes from \$2.4 billion in tax increases the states' governors have proposed and \$2.5 billion in other non-tax revenue enhancements, the report said.

While revenues have increased, the states have still had to struggle with their budgets, the report said, and much of the reason for that is increased Medicaid spending. Most the states have seen increases in Medicaid enrollments (Wisconsin's Medicaid population grew by 7.2 percent, Maine's by 9.6 percent, Connecticut's by 7.6 percent, Colorado's by 10.7 percent, Utah's by 10 percent and Wyoming's by 10.1 percent. In contrast, Oregon's fell by 11.4 percent. Michigan's increased by 6 percent.), and 23 states had to spend more on the program than initial budget estimates. Pennsylvania had to spend nearly \$760 million more on Medicaid alone.

Michigan Governor Proposes Insurance Mandate for Contraception

by **Steven Ertelt**
LifeNews.com Editor

July 7, 2005

Lansing, MI (LifeNews.com) -- Michigan Governor Jennifer Granholm wants to make her state the latest to debate whether or not to force private insurance companies to provide coverage for contraception. The debate has state Catholic groups concerned and it could spill over into the abortion debate.

Granholm's proposal gives pro-life groups pause because it could be used to cover the so-called morning after pill, or Plan B, which can sometimes cause abortions. It could also be used to eventually cover the dangerous abortion drug RU 486.

Granholm called the proposal "an aggressive effort to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies in Michigan." There were 29,540 abortions in Michigan in 2003, the latest year for which data is available.

However, Catholic groups in the state are concerned about the ramifications of being forced to cover morally objectionable items under employee health insurance plans.

Kristen Cella, associate for public policy at the pro-life Michigan Catholic Conference, told the Detroit News, "It's unfortunate to hear that she supports contraception equity mandates. Our understanding was that the governor had a greater respect for religious freedom than this statement indicates."

Cella told the newspaper that Granholm's plan puts Catholic business owners "in a position of choosing to withhold a benefit from employees or to participate in something that goes against our religious viewpoints."

Requiring insurance coverage for contraception has been in issue in other states, such as California, where pro-life groups worried a similar California law would set the stage for possibly forcing Catholic and other Christian groups to pay for other immoral activities such as abortion or assisted suicides, if legalized.

The U.S. Supreme Court turned back an appeal of a California Supreme Court decision saying the insurance mandate was constitutional.

Some 20 states require employers that have prescription drug benefit plans to also cover birth control pills and other forms of contraception. Such laws typically exempt churches but not church-affiliated organizations or hospitals.

Cella also said he was surprised that Granholm went back on a 2002 campaign promise to not support insurance mandates.

But, Granholm press secretary Liz Boyd told the News that the governor doesn't view the proposal as an insurance mandate because it only applies to insurance plans that cover prescriptions.

Part of the governor's plan is meeting with more positive reception from pro-life organizations. She hopes to launch a new program for voluntary tutoring for parents under the "Talk Early Talk Often" program, which will include abstinence education.

Ed Rivet, legislative director for Right to Life of Michigan, said his group could support that component of the proposal.

"The governor's plan to get parents more involved to try and promote abstinence is consistent with policies that we have supported," Rivet told the Detroit News.

Granholm's plan also calls on increasing the amount of state tax dollars allocated for family planning services for poor state residents.

Ari Adler, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema of Wyoming, said Republican, who control the state legislature, would not likely support Granholm's proposal because of concerns from pro-life groups and the business and insurance communities.

Granholm plan met by mixed reviews

Friday, July 08, 2005

By STEVEN HARMON
THE GRAND RAPIDS PRESS

GRAND RAPIDS -- Dr. Laurence Burns says he has seen too many women come through his office with unwanted pregnancies. And they had heard all the warnings about the dangers of unprotected sex and had access to contraceptives.

So, Burns, an OB-GYN and past president of Grand Rapids Right to Life, is skeptical of Gov. Jennifer Granholm's plan to reduce unintended pregnancies.

Her plan would provide contraceptives to low-income women, foster parental involvement in talking to teens about sex and require insurance companies that cover such drugs as Viagra to offer coverage for contraceptives.

"I wouldn't look for that to make a big difference," Burns said. "Most women know about contraceptives and about its availability. Most women who get abortions have used some type of birth control but stopped using and got pregnant. That's the group that gets pregnant and gets abortions."

Granholm, in Grandville on Thursday to promote her jobs plan, said her plan should be embraced by those who oppose abortion rights.

"We want to reduce the incidents of abortion as well," she said.

Right to Life of Michigan is neutral on the plan, but a spokeswoman said she regarded it as an attempt to pre-empt Granholm's conservative critics on the morals front for next year's gubernatorial campaign.

"I look at the timing of this," Pam Sherstad said. "With the idea of future elections, she's trying to look like she's really trying to help women in need. We're neutral, but we want to see how it's carried out."

At least one Republican, however, is urging her colleagues to hold their fire.

"It's a lofty, admirable goal," said state Rep. Barb VanderVeen, R-Allendale. "Politically, in the House, there's a reticence (among Republicans) to do anything that's in agreement with the governor. But, sometimes, you have to put politics aside if it's the right thing and get behind it."

VanderVeen said she was "100 percent behind" the "Talk Early, Talk Often" pilot program, which will include workshops for parents of middle-school students on how they can talk with youngsters about reproductive issues. Ottawa County is one of the 12 sites.

VanderVeen also supports the legislation to require insurance companies that offer Viagra to offer contraceptives.

"My only concern is if contraceptives are given to minors without parental consent," she said.

The insurance industry is expected to raise the biggest objection, said Jared Rodriguez, vice president of public policy and government affairs at the Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce.

"We do not want any mandates," Rodriguez said. "It's a cost thing."

Companies are taking the short view if they are worried about added costs to cover contraception, said Alice St. Clair, of Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan.

"It's cost effective to prevent a pregnancy versus the costs of an unwanted pregnancy," she said.

"It makes financial sense for everyone in the long run."

State Sen. Bill Hardiman, R-Kentwood, said he supported the overall goal.

"Certainly, we need to work toward reducing unwanted pregnancies," Hardiman said. "Parents need to talk about sex. But I want to make sure that parents can see the materials beforehand and have an input on what's discussed."

The earliest organization on record to oppose the plan, the Michigan Catholic Conference, said the plan pushes birth control for young women.

"Rather than helping them avoid young, premarital sexual activity, we're enabling it, said Kristen Cella, of the Michigan Catholic Conference.

Mary Haarman, spokeswoman for the Grand Rapids Catholic Conference, declined to comment, saying she had not had a chance to review the proposal.

Press staff writer Julia Bauer contributed to this story.

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Interrogations must be taped

Wisconsin State court ruling applies to juveniles

By MARY ZAHN

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Posted: July 7, 2005

Law enforcement agencies statewide were ordered Thursday by the state Supreme Court to immediately begin electronically recording juvenile interrogations in both felony and misdemeanor

The groundbreaking decision, which left some financially strapped police departments wondering how they will pay for additional recording equipment, was widely praised by attorneys, judges and others who said it would protect both children and police from false accusations.

"It's an excellent decision and long overdue," said John Birdsall, president of the Wisconsin Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. "It's going to be an adjustment for both the district attorneys and the police, but it is a welcome change."

Milwaukee County Children's Court Judges Mary Triggiano and Joseph Wall said the new requirement will help them get a clearer picture of the circumstances of juvenile confessions and could save court time.

"It will likely lead to pretrial resolutions of more cases because there may not be any dispute as to what happened" during the interrogation, Wall said.

The ruling says audiotaping is sufficient to meet the requirement, "but videotaping may provide an even more complete picture" of the interrogation.

The decision involved the case of a 14-year-old Milwaukee County boy who was found guilty in a May 2001 robbery at a fast-food restaurant. Court records state that he was arrested at his home and taken to a Milwaukee police station, where he was handcuffed to a wall in an interrogation room and left alone for about two hours.

The boy continually denied being involved in the crime and made several requests to call his parents, but was refused. After about 5 1/2 hours of interrogation, he signed a statement, prepared by one of the detectives, confessing to the crime.

The boy's appeal argued that his confession was involuntary. In Thursday's decision, the court found that the boy's confession had been coerced. It noted that his young age made him "uncommonly susceptible to police pressure" and that he was of "low-average" intelligence. While the boy had been arrested twice in the past for misdemeanors, in those cases he was released after he answered questions from police, was never found delinquent and was allowed to go home.

"Not only did the detectives refuse to believe (the boy's) repeated denials of guilt, but they also joined in urging him to tell a different 'truth,' sometimes using a 'strong voice' that 'frightened' him," the decision says.

"It is time for Wisconsin to tackle the false confession issue and take appropriate action so that the youth of our state are protected from confessing to crimes they did not commit," the decision says.

Other confessions questioned

Thursday's case was not the first time the confession of a juvenile in Milwaukee County was challenged. In a decision earlier this year, Children's Court Judge Michael Malmstadt threw out the confession of a 14-year-old

boy who was one of six suspects charged in the death of David Rutledge, 54, who was beaten by a gang of juveniles and adults in July 2004.

In his decision, Malmstadt noted that the child had no previous arrests and was questioned by police for close to 15 hours before he signed a confession, and that "the record is sparse with respect to the manner of the interrogation."

A hearing on whether the confession of a 13-year-old charged in the same case was valid is continuing. In that instance, the child had significant learning disabilities and was also questioned for at least 15 hours, according to motions filed by his attorney. Police have denied any misconduct or coercive acts in obtaining the confessions.

"The number one thing kids say about why they falsely confess is that 'I just thought I'd get to go home,' " said Eileen Hirsch, an assistant state public defender, who represented the boy in Thursday's Supreme Court decision.

"They are confessing to murders and armed robberies and other crimes, and we know that you are never going to go home after you do that," Hirsch said. "But they don't know that because they are kids. They believe that the only way they are going to go home is if they agree with the authority figures."

Milwaukee County District Attorney E. Michael McCann called the Supreme Court decision reasonable, but added that he was concerned about the impact on the high volume of misdemeanor cases.

"Say a kid is taking stones to knock out street lamps," he said. "That's generally a misdemeanor offense. The cop catches him. 'What are you doing here?' Do you tell him to remain quiet until he gets to the police station? It definitely creates problems."

Recording is required in all future cases "where feasible, and without exception when questioning occurs in a place of detention," the ruling says.

Police agencies react

Milwaukee police commanders met to discuss the decision Thursday afternoon and figure out what the department needs to do to comply with the order, said police spokeswoman Anne E. Schwartz.

The department currently does not tape any interrogations, which are done in several locations, she said.

"We need to come up with a stopgap until we acquire the appropriate equipment," she said. "We are coming up with a plan."

Waukesha police Capt. Mike Babe called the decision an unfunded mandate.

"It's going to involve more time and more money. And who's paying for it? It's going to be the taxpayers," Babe said.

State Rep. Mark Gundrum (R-New Berlin) said he plans to introduce legislation later this year that would encourage recording of both juvenile and adult interrogations by requiring that juries be told it is state policy to record such interrogations. The bill also would provide money for equipment from fines paid by criminals.

Dave Sheeley and John Diedrich of the Journal Sentinel staff contributed to this report.

Teens Charged In Carjacking, Murder At Gas Station

Victim's Final Words Spoken To 911 Dispatcher

ClickOnDetroit

POSTED: 4:48 pm EDT July 7, 2005

UPDATED: 6:55 pm EDT July 7, 2005

Two teenagers were arraigned in 50th District Court in Pontiac on Thursday in connection with a carjacking and shooting at a gas station.

Christopher Eugene Jackson, 17, and his alleged accomplice, Cordero Landrum, 18, were both charged with murder, carjacking and felony possession of a firearm, Local 4 reported.

David Lee Bingham, 38, ran inside a Pontiac Sunoco station on Tuesday to get help after he was carjacked. Police said Jackson followed Bingham into the station and fired four shots into his chest.

"The attendant handed him the phone and dialed 911," said Sgt. William Ware of the Pontiac police. "And as he was on the phone talking to the attendant one of the assailants came in and began shooting."

Bingham was transported to Royal Oak Beaumont Hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

Jackson and Landrum are scheduled to appear for a preliminary hearing on June 21 at 9 a.m.

Costs deterring women from health care

Medicine, sexual health delayed or ignored

July 8, 2005

BY ELY PORTILLO
KNIGHT RIDDER NEWSPAPERS

WASHINGTON -- A quarter of U.S. women say they're skipping doctor visits and delaying or skipping on prescribed drugs because they can't afford them.

Women are also passing on preventive care, such as osteoporosis tests, according to a survey released Thursday by the Kaiser Family Foundation, a health advocacy group.

Even women who go to their doctors often aren't talking about lifestyle concerns such as smoking, exercise, reproductive health and sexually transmitted diseases, the study found.

Twenty-seven percent of women under the Medicare age of 65 told Kaiser that they'd skipped or delayed care that they thought they needed in the prior year. Among uninsured women, the figure soared to two-thirds.

One-fifth of all women said they hadn't bought at least one prescribed drug because they felt they couldn't afford it.

The findings are based on a representative sample of 2,766 women nationwide.

The numbers track a Kaiser study in 2001 in which 25% of women under Medicare age and 59% of uninsured women said they'd delayed or skipped care due to its cost.

Patients discuss cost, not health

Amy Niles, president of the National Women's Health Resource Center, blamed cost -- and lack of time -- for women's skimping on their health care. Her group sponsored a similar study last year.

In the latest Kaiser study, 55% of women said that they'd talked to their doctor in the past three years about a lumped-together category called "diet, exercise and nutrition."

Less than a third of all women of reproductive age said they'd talked with a doctor about their sexual history, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

According to researcher Susan Sered, who did interviews for the study, one of the most frequent conversations women reported having with doctors was about paying for care.

"Money was actually replacing things like lifestyle in discussions with doctors," she said.

Fighting for Health

June 29, 2005

The country is in the midst of a health care crisis. We all know that. As costs skyrocket and politicians address the problem with lip service instead of reform, people across the country are left bankrupt and begging for mercy. Given that disheartening big picture, some Ferndale residents are trying to take matters into their own hands by pushing for a free clinic to be set up in their town.

Since January, a group of about 12 people led by activist **Stephanie Loveless** has been going door-to-door to drum up support for such a clinic among the city's 22,000 residents. For the project to succeed, said residents would have to fund it by raising taxes on themselves.

All the door-knocking is intended to lay the groundwork for a forthcoming petition drive that will attempt to get the issue placed on the November ballot, Loveless says.

"There is a clear need for this in Ferndale," she says. "There are a lot of working poor in Ferndale. We're hoping it will work and that other places will follow suit."

As envisioned, the project would cost the average Ferndale household about \$50 a year. One full-time physician, several nurses and one receptionist would staff the clinic. Loveless says she would like to work with area hospitals to help get the project off the ground.

It's not yet clear how many beds the facility would have, or where it would be located. Loveless says her research indicates that the cost of opening a modest clinic would be about \$600,000. So far, she says, the group (which has no name yet) has given out some 5,000 cards and received several hundred responses; the group hopes to begin gathering signatures by the end of July.

According to Ferndale's city charter, the group has 60 days from the date the first petition is signed to collect 293 valid signatures, a number equal to 20 percent of the votes for the highest vote-getter on City Council.

Loveless expects a fight. "It's not going to be a problem getting it on the ballot," she says. "The problem will be getting it passed."

City Manager **Tom Barwin** says such an initiative in Ferndale is "unprecedented." He also says that getting the measure passed will be difficult.

"But," Barwin says, "if the voters approve such an initiative, the city administration is going to be 110 percent supportive."

"It certainly is an intriguing idea," he adds. "This shows that Ferndale is an active laboratory of democracy."

If you want to aid the cause, contact the group at 248-545-4215 or 248-542-2016.

News Hits is edited by Curt Guyette. Contact the column at 313-202-8004 or NewsHits@metrotimes.com.

Clinic offers free services for diabetics

It treats about 4,000 patients a year

July 7, 2005

By CHRISTINE FINGER

Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY - Ann Johnson-Saul has lived with diabetes for 17 years, but didn't know where to turn when she lost her health insurance.

"I had overdone it one weekend and my arms swelled up," she said of the day she ended up in a local urgent care clinic for treatment. "They couldn't help me because I didn't have insurance."

The staff there steered her to the Community Health Clinic where she met E. Patrick Juras, a retired doctor who runs the free clinic's weekly diabetes program. She and Juras want to get the word out that help is available before patients end up in an emergency room.

"I think there are more people out there who are in the same situation and don't know about us," Juras said.

The Community Health Clinic treats about 4,000 uninsured and underinsured patients every year, and the staff includes volunteer doctors and nurses. It moved in April to South Airport Road across from Logan's Landing.

Johnson-Saul is among eight to 10 patients at the weekly diabetes clinic, open each Wednesday. By the time she came there, she hadn't been taking diabetes medication for two years. She is self-employed and her family lost health insurance coverage when her husband changed jobs.

"I wish I would have found out two years ago," said Johnson-Saul, whose health improved significantly in the two months since her first visit. "I'm going to refer anyone right here in a heartbeat."

Juras said the diabetes program is one example of quality, compassionate care the free clinic aims to provide and reflects the growing complexity of patients' needs. The nature of diabetes makes education, continuity and follow-up care crucial, he said. Uncontrolled diabetes can lead to heart disease, kidney problems and blindness.

"One of the keys to our success is realizing that treating diabetes isn't just about passing out pills and monitoring blood sugar," Juras said.

For more information, call 935-0668.

Mich. 1st to offer e-mail protection for children

*By MARA DEUTCH
The State News
July 8, 2005*

For parents like Detroit attorney Talia Goetting, who worry about the e-mails their children are receiving, there is a new program in place to ease their fears.

Michigan is the first state to create a registry to prevent certain spam e-mails from reaching a minor's online account.

"I'd hate for (my daughter) to open something up at such a young age and be shocked," Goetting said, adding her 7-year-old daughter recently started e-mailing people.

In 2004, the Michigan Children's Protection Registry Act was created to prohibit people from sending e-mail to children about products or services that are illegal for minors. On Friday, the Protect MI Child Registry was created based on this act and prevents companies from marketing products such as tobacco, pornography and illegal drugs to minors through e-mail.

"I'm proud that Michigan is the first state in the nation to develop this registry and provide a way for parents and teachers to protect our children from unsuitable e-mails," said Gov. Jennifer Granholm in a statement.

Judy Palnau, spokeswoman for the Michigan Public Service Commission, said once a child is on the registry, online marketers will have 30 days to stop sending e-mails before they are held responsible.

Online marketers who were contacted about the registry did not respond. Some supporters hope the registry will help parents.

"We certainly hope it will be successful because we need to provide as many tools to parents and families to protecting children," said Ari Adler, spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema, R-Wyoming.

As of Tuesday, there have been more than 7,000 completed registrations, Palnau said, and the Web site is getting about one hit per second.

According to the Web site, www.michigan.gov/protectmichild, parents can file a complaint with the attorney general if their child is still receiving spam e-mails 30 days after registering.

"He will handle the complaint, and depending on what's going on, the first offense is a misdemeanor, and afterward, it's a felony," Palnau said.

Although the registry is only for e-mail addresses that minors have access to, anyone over 18 could potentially sign up for the registry. However, Palnau said, if someone over 18 were to join the registry, he or she would not be able to file a complaint because the law only protects minors. Within the next two months, the registry will expand to include instant messages and even text messaging via mobile phones, Palnau said.

"When my daughter is older there will be instant messaging or texting through mobile phones and the Web site will block all that," Goetting said. "That gives me some sort of control."

Program pays families to house seniors

*By Alice Dembner,
The Boston Globe Staff
July 8, 2005*

Massachusetts has begun paying family members to house and care for their frail older relatives in an effort to keep them out of nursing homes and save the state money.

The program pays \$1,500 a month to caregivers to make it more feasible for family members to provide round-the-clock care to a senior who needs extensive help with everyday tasks, such as eating, bathing, dressing, and using the toilet. It has enrolled 21 seniors since beginning on a trial basis in March, and will expand this fall to as many as 80 low-income seniors or disabled people, funded by \$2 million in the state budget signed into law last week.

The state's goal is to provide the housing and home care that seniors want while reducing admissions to expensive nursing homes. The state expects to spend \$1.6 billion for nursing home care this year.

"It's offering people a more compassionate level of care provided by people they know they're comfortable with . . . at a cost about half that of a nursing home," said Representative Barbara L'Italien, an Andover Democrat who pressed for inclusion of the money in the budget. She and other officials expect the program will be expanded to serve many more in future years. Advocates say as many as 8,000 people could be eligible, depending on the criteria ultimately set by the state.

A growing number of states pay family members to house and care for seniors. But the practice has spread slowly because some people question whether society should pay for services that relatives have long provided for free. In addition, there are concerns about the quality of care and potential abuse of seniors. The Massachusetts program, called Caring Homes, is the latest state effort to help ailing seniors remain in their communities. Massachusetts has historically had a larger percentage of its seniors in nursing homes than many other states -- in 2001, 6.8 percent of those over 65 were in nursing homes here, compared with 4.4 percent nationally.

Under a similar program called Adult Foster Care, which has been available for years, the state pays people to take in seniors and disabled people who need help. But that program excludes relatives as caregivers because of societal concerns about government paying family members.

Separately, disabled seniors may pay family members with state funds to provide several hours a day of personal care, but that service does not provide housing or continuous care. Caring Homes is the first state program to combine housing with paid caregiving by relatives, though federal rules require that the program exclude spouses and dependent children as caregivers.

"It's been wonderful," said Eleanor Smith, who moved her 81-year-old father, Gerald Dupuis, into her rural Templeton home last winter, shortly before the program started. Dupuis had repeatedly fallen out of bed in his elderly housing apartment and was living on fish sticks and chicken nuggets -- an unhealthy diet, particularly for a diabetic such as Dupuis. Bad balance, weak legs, and confusion compounded his more serious ailments of congestive heart failure, kidney trouble, and lung disease.

"I had promised him that I wouldn't put him in a nursing home," Smith said, but "he couldn't be on his own anymore."

Smith, 42, had been missing more and more work caring for her father in his own home until she had to quit her job as manager of a beauty supply store. Without the state stipend, she said, she couldn't afford to stay home with him. Not only did the family lose her income, but expenses rose with her father home all day and on oxygen.

At Smith's ranch house, Dupuis is only a few miles from Gardner, where he lived all his life. He maneuvers around the house with his walker, tethered to a hose from an oxygen tank, but can also go outside onto the deck or make midnight raids on the cookie jar (stocked with diabetic-friendly treats).

"If I had to go to a nursing home, I wouldn't take my medicine and I wouldn't eat," Dupuis said. "If I'm going to die, I want to die here. I love it here."

The program was proposed here by Mass Home Care, an association of nonprofit home care providers that is being paid to help administer Caring Homes. It is modeled on a program in Oregon, which was the first in the nation when it was set up in the 1980s and now serves 2,000 seniors.

"It's good public policy that supports family care, home-based care, and is cost-effective," said Cindy Hannum, an administrator in the Oregon Department of Human Services. "Some states have been against this because it seemed like paying families for what they should do anyway. But in real life, it's hard for families, since they have other obligations."

Nationwide, more than 8 million family members are providing unpaid care for loved ones 50 and older living in their household, according to a survey conducted last year by AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving. Many who were providing constant care told surveyors it posed a financial hardship.

In the Massachusetts Caring Homes program, federal Medicaid rules exclude spouses and dependent children from being paid caregivers. But Vermont and North Dakota, which have similar programs, have won federal waivers or use state funds to include spouses. Massachusetts supporters hope for the same.

"We believe there are thousands of family members who would like this opportunity to take care of a loved one in their home," said Al Norman, executive director of Mass Home Care.

While the programs have gotten high marks from consumers in other states, concerns remain.

"There are times when the caregiver is exploiting or harming or neglecting the patient, and it's very hard for the patient to fire their own family member or even report that things aren't going well," said Joanne M. Otto, executive director of the National Adult Protective Services Association. She said that in 60 percent of elder abuse cases, the abuser is a family member.

"In addition, well-intentioned family members may not be trained caregivers," she said. "There needs to be support and oversight."

Before the state begins paying a family for the care, state contractors evaluate the senior's needs, the home's safety, and the caretaker's qualifications. The care is monitored by a nurse, who visits monthly, and a case manager who checks on the family regularly.

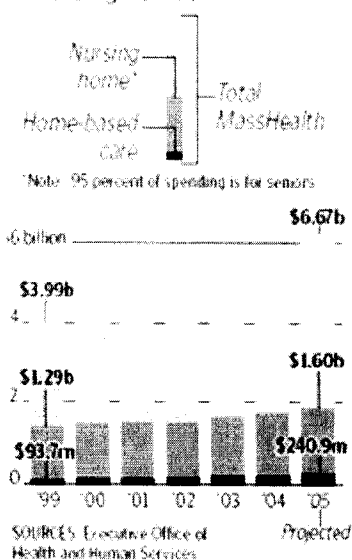
"While there are still circumstances where nursing homes are the right choice, the only choice should not have to be institutional care," said Perry Trilling, assistant secretary of Elder Affairs.

Information on the program can be obtained by calling MassHealth's customer service center at 800-841-2900.

Alice Dembner can be reached at dembner@globe.com.

Care for seniors

Massachusetts is increasing the amount of care provided to seniors at home through Medicaid, but the amount is still dwarfed by care provided in nursing homes.



IN BRIEF

Local daycare providers receive state grant

Thursday, July 07, 2005
Jackson Citizen Patriot

Three local child-care providers will receive grants from the state Department of Human Services as part of \$661,371 delegated to providers statewide last month.

The grants are part of the Enhanced Quality Improvement Program, aimed to help child care providers who serve children from low-income families.

In Concord, Therese Tuszynski was awarded \$3,492 for storage, indoor activities and outdoor equipment. Jennifer Curtis of Spring Arbor was granted \$3,385 for infant and outdoor equipment, storage and indoor activities. In Stockbridge, Tammy Kowalski received \$3,489 for a fence, infant and outdoor equipment and indoor activities. At least 173 child-care providers received grants for equipment, resources to build child care capacity, and improve caregiver knowledge and techniques.

Grants ranged from \$1,000 to \$15,000 and were given to existing child-care providers and 30 new providers as start-up grants.

Red Cross brings back position

Jennifer Williams has returned to the South Central Michigan Chapter of the American Red Cross as the blood services director.

Williams held the position for eight years before it was cut two years ago due to budget constraints. "We're really pleased to have Jennifer back," said chapter Executive Director Karen Randall. "It opens new opportunities for the chapter."

The position was restored July 1.

As blood services director, Williams will oversee all blood drives for Jackson and Hillsdale counties and will be able to recruit new donor sites, Randall said.

Williams will also help organize the start-up of the chapter's Youth Corps Committee, to get more youth involved with the American Red Cross, Randall said.

Muster needs more volunteers

The 21st annual Cascades Civil War Muster needs more volunteers, an official said.

Volunteers are needed for merchandise and book sales, hosting and guide duty, to help give out information, traffic control and to help with parking.

Slated for Aug. 27 and 28, the annual event promotes historical awareness about the Civil War. "Funds and volunteers from the community are what put the event on," said Hank Miller, the event's volunteer coordinator. "It's completely free."

Volunteers will be accepted at any time, but earlier commitments are appreciated for scheduling, Miller said.

There will be a volunteer reception at 6:30 p.m. July 28 at the Cascades picnic pavilion on Denton Road.
For more information, contact Hank or Mary Miller at 769-6596 or visit www.civilwarmuster.org.
-- Compiled from staff reports

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 7, 2005

Governor Granholm Makes Appointments

LANSING – Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced the following recent appointments and reappointments:

Residential Builders' and Maintenance and Alteration Contractors' Board:

Jennifer Schoats Flack of Orchard Lake, shareholder and attorney at Seyburn, Kahn, Ginn, Bess & Serlin, P.C. Ms. Flack is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring March 31, 2008. She succeeds Gary Llewellyn whose term has expired. Marilyn Lane of Fraser, owner and developer of Lane Development, Inc. Ms. Lane is appointed to represent licensed residential builders for a term expiring March 31, 2007. She succeeds David Pierce Williams whose term has expired.

Kevin M. Lewand of Birmingham, president and owner of Lewand Custom Homes. Mr. Lewand is appointed to represent licensed residential builders for a term expiring March 31, 2008. He succeeds Nancy Huntley whose term has expired.

Mark J. Zausmer of West Bloomfield, managing partner at Zausmer, Kaufman, August & Caldwell, P.C. law firm. Mr. Zausmer is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring March 31, 2008. He succeeds Denise Ketchmark whose term has expired. The Residential Builders' and Maintenance and Alteration Contractors' Board provides for the licensing of persons who engage in business as residential builders, residential maintenance and alteration contractors, and salespersons. It sets standards of qualification and eligibility for licensure, authorizes the collection and expenditures of fees, and provides penalties for the violation of Public Act 299 of 1980, including unlicensed operation.

These appointments are subject to Article V, Section 6 of the Michigan State Constitution of 1963. They stand confirmed unless disapproved by the Senate within 60 days.

Child Support Leadership Council

Jennie E. Barkey, J.D. of Flushing, friend of the court for Genesee County. Ms. Barkey is reappointed for a term expiring April 11, 2007.

Brian L. Mackie, J.D. of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County prosecuting attorney. Mr. Mackie is reappointed for a term expiring April 11, 2007.

The Child Support Leadership Council advises the governor and the Supreme Court on the development and implementation of strategic goals for improving services to Michigan families.

These reappointments are not subject to disapproval.

Board of Cosmetology

Lydia Marie Price Griffin of Detroit, owner and operator of Simply Chic Salon. Ms. Griffin is appointed to represent cosmetologists for a term expiring December 31, 2008. She succeeds Christopher Flourney whose term has expired.

Gail T. Livingston-Scott of Detroit, teacher at Crockett Technical High School and operator of ML Press and Curl. Ms. Livingston-Scott is appointed to represent cosmetologists actively engaged in teaching cosmetology for a term expiring December 31, 2008. She succeeds Cynthia Stramecky whose term has expired.

Edith A. Marshall of Eastpointe, technical consultant of cosmetology with Warren Woods Adult Education-Cosmetology Department. Ms. Marshall is appointed to represent cosmetologists for a term expiring December 31, 2005. She succeeds John Y. Karimalis who has resigned.

The Michigan Board of Cosmetology provides for the licensing and regulation of cosmetologists, cosmetology schools, cosmetology instructors, electrologists, and manicurists.

These appointments are subject to Article V, Section 6 of the Michigan State Constitution of 1963. They stand confirmed unless disapproved by the Senate within 60 days.

Quality Community Care Council

Kathy J. (Flowers) McGeathy of Flushing, community support coordinator and advocate for the Disability Network. Ms. McGeathy is reappointed to represent consumer advocates for a term expiring June 17, 2009.

Sara E. Harrison of Lansing, retired volunteer worker. Ms. Harrison is reappointed to represent consumers for a term expiring June 17, 2009.

The Michigan Quality Community Care Council promotes and coordinates effective and efficient personal assistance services, including creating and maintaining one or more registries of providers of in-home care services in designated Michigan communities.

These appointments are not subject to disapproval.

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Leadership program accepting applications

Program designed to expand pool of volunteer leaders

Friday, July 8, 2005

From News Staff reports

The nine-month program is designed to expand the pool of informed, civic-oriented volunteer leaders by providing information about community resources, identifying local concerns and giving participants the opportunity to interact with others who have demonstrated their leadership abilities.

Anyone with an interest in ensuring the quality of Livingston County's social and economic future is invited to submit an application by the Aug. 5 deadline. The tuition for Leadership Livingston is \$1,100, which covers all textbooks, course materials, meals and a recognition banquet. Scholarship money for tuition assistance is available.

Leadership Livingston, which was launched in 1992, is a joint effort of Cleary University and the Brighton and Howell Area Chambers of Commerce. The program includes day-long sessions that are scheduled for the third Friday of each month, September-May. Each session addresses a different community issue, such as education, quality of life, state-local government and future challenges. In addition, participants gain hands-on experience by taking part in a team-selected group community-service project.

For more information about Leadership Livingston and scholarship availability, contact Janet Filip, Cleary University's director of development and alumni relations and the coordinator for Leadership Livingston, at (517) 548-3670, ext. 2228 or jfilip@cleary.edu.

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Friday, July 8, 2005

Livingston garden tour aids victims of abuse Countywide fund-raiser sponsored by the LACASA agency supports shelters and counseling programs.

By Jon Zemke / Special to The Detroit News

BRIGHTON TOWNSHIP -- For Lisa Webster, the annual LACASA Garden Tour has been a long time coming.

The Brighton Township resident has been trying for four years to have her garden featured on the tour. Her garden, with ornamental grasses and perennials, was picked as one of the main gardens for the tour this year.

"I've always thought the garden tour was a wonderful way to raise funds," said Webster, a teacher's assistant for the Brighton Area School District.

The 7th annual LACASA Garden Tour will take place this weekend in gardens across Livingston County. The event also will include a market day and an evening of food and wine tasting.

The Garden Tour is the nonprofit agency's biggest fund-raiser of the year. The money raised helps support LACASA programs, such as providing shelters and counseling for those suffering from spousal, child or sexual abuse.

"It has grown from a very small tour with only a few guests," said Cindy Jones-Guerin, the marketing and communications director for LACASA. "Now we have more than 1,000 tour guests."

Ten gardens are participating in the tour this year. The gardens will be in the Brighton, Howell and Fowlerville areas. Last year, the tour raised more than \$30,000.

Artists will be on hand and artwork of the gardens will be on display and up for sale in a silent auction throughout the weekend.

LACASA also will introduce a "Garden Market" as part of the tour's weekend activities. The market will be held at the Genoa Township Hall, 2911 Dorr Road, between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday and will be free and open to the public.

The garden market will host a variety of vendors selling garden items, plants, natural products and refreshments. The Genoa Township Memorial Gardens, which are on the grounds of the township hall, will also be on display.

There will also be the "Twilight in the Garden" food and wine tasting at 6:30 p.m. Saturday. It will be held in the Holden Garden, 10201 Kress Road. Money raised from all of the events over the weekend will go toward LACASA.

About the tour

What: The LACASA Garden Tour

When: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

Where: Ten gardens in the Howell, Brighton and Fowlerville areas

Tickets: \$12 in advance or \$15 at the tour

Information: Call (517) 548-1350

Jon Zemke is a Metro Detroit freelance writer.

Unger ordered to stand trial in his wife's death

July 8, 2005

BY FRANK WITSIL
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

After a year of legal wrangling and almost two years after Florence Unger's death, a Benzie County judge ruled Thursday that Mark Unger of Huntington Woods must face trial on second-degree murder charges.

Unger, 44, is accused of killing his wife while they were on a weekend getaway in northern Michigan in 2003.

In a written ruling, 85th District Court Judge Brent Danielson said that the prosecution did not present a possible theory of premeditation in the slaying of Florence Unger, 37 -- which would preclude a charge for first-degree murder.

Unger's attorney, Robert Harrison, argued that the case should be dismissed, adding that he would appeal Thursday's ruling, which could further delay the start of a trial. A trial date has not been set.

The case, which has gained national attention, has had an unusually long preliminary examination. It also has sparked a custody battle over the Unger children: Max, 11, and Tyler, 9, who are now in the care of their maternal grandparents, Harold and Claire Stern, of Huntington Woods, who declined comment Thursday.

Usually, a preliminary examination -- a hearing for a judge to determine whether there is probable cause for a trial -- lasts a few hours, or at most, a few days. In this case, the hearing has taken a year. Mark Unger, who is free on bail, has been barred from having contact with his sons.

Allison Pierce, a spokeswoman for Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox, said she had not seen the ruling and declined to comment Thursday.

Mark Unger was arrested on May 19, 2004, and charged with first-degree murder. Cox argued that Florence Unger hit a cement slab after being assaulted by her husband, who then tried to cover up what had happened by dragging his wife's body into Lower Herring Lake and drowning her.

Mark Unger has said he had nothing to do with his wife's death. He called it a horrible accident, and his attorney theorized that she might have fallen off a deck.

Harrison said the judge's ruling was based on testimony indicating that Florence Unger's body had been moved, and that Mark Unger was the only one who had been with her the night before her body was found on Oct. 25, 2003.

A key piece of the prosecution's evidence that was excluded by Danielson was testimony from Oakland County Medical Examiner L.J. Dragovic. He concluded based on his forensic expertise that Florence Unger did not die from a fall, but had drowned and was still alive when she went into the water.

Contact FRANK WITSIL at 248-351-3690 or witsil@freepress.com.